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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FURTHER INITIATIVES
Organizational session
New York, 19-22 May 1998
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION

Letter dated 8 May 1998 from the Permanent Observer for Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit for your consideration the offer of the Government of Switzerland to welcome to Geneva in the year 2000 the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/243 (para. 5), Switzerland is prepared to finance the additional costs involved in holding the session in Geneva. Moreover, my Government would support on a voluntary basis the participation of least developed countries and the organization of parallel events.

The main considerations underlying the offer of the Government of Switzerland are summarized in the annex. This offer is, of course, subject to your approval and a favourable decision by Member States. I hope that this proposal will generate interest and support.

(Signed) Jenö C. A. STAEHELIN

* A/AC.253/1.

Annex

FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
(COPENHAGEN, MARCH 1995)

Proposal to hold the special session of the United Nations General Assembly in the year 2000 in Geneva

1. General

On 27 April 1998, the Swiss Federal Council decided that:

- Switzerland is prepared to welcome a special session of the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva in the year 2000. This session will be devoted to the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

- Switzerland will assume all additional costs to the United Nations, and support the participation of least developed countries.

- This is contingent upon a favourable decision of Member States and t Secretary-General

The Secretariat and the Swiss authorities are in the process of determin a budgetary package covering:

- Additional costs to the United Nations, that is, transportation and daily subsistence allowance for the necessary United Nations personn from New York and so forth.

- A voluntary Swiss contribution for the participation of least development countries and non-governmental organizations and for the organization of parallel events.

2. When is it possible to meet in Geneva?

- According to its resolution 40/243, the General Assembly decided tha

  "United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective established headquarters" (para. 4).

- Yet, exceptions are possible:

  "United Nations bodies may hold sessions away from their established headquarters when a Government issuing an invitatio for a session to be held within its territory has agreed to defray, after consultation with the Secretary-General as to the nature and possible extent, the actual additional costs directl or indirectly involved" (para. 5).

- When?

The Government of Switzerland proposes that the General Assembly meet at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 26 to 30 June 2000.

3. What does the special session on the Summit represent?

- The World Summit for Social Development (March 1995) brought together a larger number of Heads of State or Government (118) than any other global conference held previously.

- The United Nations is the global centre for:

  - Providing major impetus in the area of social development;

  - Discussing the globalization of the economy and proposing solutions to implement and coordinate questions relating to the social dimension of globalization.

- The special session will foster significant political impetus in the social and economic fields at the dawn of the twenty-first century, relying on a pragmatic and constructive approach.

- The special session will be in line with Geneva's traditional role as the international centre of reflection and decision-making on socio-economic questions, especially the social dimension of globalization.

4. Synergies with competent international organizations based in Geneva

- The social dimension of globalization is of such magnitude that it justifies the intervention of the United Nations. The system's specialized agencies possess the necessary technical knowledge and expertise to contribute to the formulation of solutions in matters relating to social development, employment and labour.

- The following forums are almost all based in Geneva, and should reinforce their synergies of action: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Economic and Social Council (every two years). Of the major players in this field, only the Bretton Woods institutions are based in Washington.

- The central role of ILO:

  ILO must be closely associated with the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and be actively engaged in the analysis and resolution of related questions. It must, in addition, establish itself as the centre of excellence in matters of labour and employment.

5. Logistical advantages of Geneva

- In the year 2000, the calendar of conferences and meetings in New York is already overloaded and the conferences which serve as follow-up to global conferences tend to become new global conferences.

  Besides the traditional activities at the United Nations Headquarters, in pursuance of previous decisions, a session of the General Assembly devoted to the Beijing follow-up (5-9 June 2000) as well as the Millennium Assembly (September 2000) will be held in New York.

  No large-scale United Nations conference has been scheduled at Geneva in 2000 on the dates proposed.

- Switzerland wishes to stimulate discussion through the organization of parallel events with the participation of non-governmental organizations, social partners, and representatives from international and national economic sectors. Colloquiums, seminars, high-level meetings, workshops, exhibitions and discussions will all be organized to motivate General Assembly participants and to render the event more meaningful. Switzerland has allocated substantial funding to finance some of these parallel events.

- Geneva has the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the special session and its participants:

  The Palais des Nations, the International Conference Centre of Geneva (CICG), meeting rooms at the headquarters of specialized agencies.

  A large choice of hotels in all price ranges, tourist packages, leisure-time activities and so forth.

  The General Assembly devoted to the follow-up of the World Summit for Social Development is of prime importance for humanity. The Government of Switzerland is confident that in Geneva it can provide the necessary environment for fruitful deliberations.